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FM AMEMBASSY SANTO DOMINGO
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8738
INFO RUEHZA/WHA CENTRAL AMERICAN COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHWN/AMEMBASSY BRIDGETOWN PRIORITY 2078
RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS PRIORITY 0785
RUEHGE/AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN PRIORITY 0985
RUEHKG/AMEMBASSY KINGSTON PRIORITY 2763
RUEHPO/AMEMBASSY PARAMARIBO PRIORITY 1119
RUEHPU/AMEMBASSY PORT AU PRINCE PRIORITY 4650
RUEHSP/AMEMBASSY PORT OF SPAIN PRIORITY 1823
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEHC/DEPT OF LABOR WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHDC PRIORITY
RUCPDO/USDOC WASHDC PRIORITY 1677
RUCOWCV/CUSTOMS CARIBBEAN ATTACHE MIAMI FL PRIORITY
RUEFHLC/HQS DHS WASHDC PRIORITY
RUMISTA/CDR USSOUTHCOM MIAMI FL PRIORITY

UNCLAS SANTO DOMINGO 001662

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STATE FOR WHA, WHA/CAR, DRL, INR/IAA; USSOUTHCOM ALSO FOR
POLAD; TREASURY FOR OASIA-JLEVINE; DEPT PASS DEPT OF LABOR
(INTERNATIONAL); DEPT PASS USDA FOR FAS;
USDOC FOR 4322/ITA/MAC/WH/CARIBBEAN BASIN DIVISION; USDOC
FOR 3134/ITA/USFCS/RD/WH; DHS FOR CIS-CARLOS ITURREGUI

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SUBJECT: DOMINICAN POLITICS III #29: NATIONAL STRIKE ENDS
PEACEFULLY; SHOWS PLD VULNERABILITY

REF: SANTO DOMINGO 1626

11. (U) This is the 29th cable in our series on Dominican
politics in the third year of the administration of President
Leonel Fernandez.

(SBU) The 24-hour national strike ended peacefully at 6:00
a.m. this morning. The strike leaders, the Alternative
Social Forum (FSA), estimated observance of the strike at 90
percent. While the FSA's figure was exaggerated, commerce
and transportation were indeed down significantly, partly due
to the fact that an important transportation union,
FENATRANO, announced its support for the strike over the
weekend. Transportation to the Embassy by personal vehicle
for American staff was not impeded; however, Foreign Service
Nationals living in the outer suburbs faced some challenges.

(U) Violence was minimal, with the following exceptions: A
man was killed on July 8 in a confrontation with the security
services in Navarete, Santiago Province (the details are
sketchy and the police are investigating); and, three
individuals were severely burned in Cienfuegos, Santiago
Province, when, it appears, one of the Molotov cocktail-style
bombs that they were fabricating exploded prematurely. There
have been a number of arrests (50, according to FSA) of
strike leaders for alleged illegal activity.

(U) FSA, a coalition of social organizations and labor
groups, organized the strike to protest social conditions and
the poor delivery of government services. Among the very
broad demands made by FSA were the lowering and freezing of
prices of basic foodstuffs, raising of salaries, reduction of
fuel taxes, a one-year moratorium on squatter evictions, and
issuing land titles to residents of poor neighborhoods. The
Embassy is not aware of any negotiations having been held

between the Government and FSA prior to and during the strike.

(SBU) The Dominican Revolutionary Party (PRD), the country's largest opposition party, lent its political support to the FSA's strike. The ruling Dominican Liberation Party (PLD) then claimed, probably correctly, that the PRD helped organize the strike. The spin by PLD officials was that the work stoppage had more to do with politics than poor social conditions.

(SBU) COMMENT: The FSA's demands were so broad and far-reaching that negotiations with the government were practically impossible. It is more likely that the FSA's objective was to send a message to the government, and that goal was achieved by the strike's significant reduction in commerce and transportation. The country's solid GDP growth figures, often touted by the government, are not being felt in the barrios. As his administration struggles to provide public services in a constrained fiscal environment, President Fernandez must know that while he remains the front-runner in the May 2008 presidential election, victory over the PRD will be no cakewalk.

-- Drafted by Peter Hemsch

12. (U) This report and extensive other material can be consulted on our SIPRNET site,
<http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/wha/santodomingo/>
BULLEN